

Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

AA – Alternatives Analysis

Alignment – The route that an improvement, such as a bus or light rail line, could take through a corridor.

Alternative – A feasible transportation improvement that is under consideration.

At-grade – Running on street level.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) – A bus system operating on an exclusive bus-only lane.

Bus – Rubber-tired vehicles operating on fixed routes and schedules on roadways. Buses are powered by diesel, gasoline, battery or alternative fuel engines contained within the vehicle.

Capital costs – The expense of designing and constructing a new project.

Commuter Rail – Urban passenger train service for local short-distance travel operating between a central city and adjacent suburbs. Service must be operated on a regular basis by or under contract with a transit operator for the purpose of transporting passengers within urbanized areas, or between urbanized areas and outlying areas.

Corridor – A narrow band of land, usually surrounding a roadway or linking communities.

Environmental Assessment (EA) — An interim decision document prepared for an action where the significance of social, economic, or environmental impact is not clearly established. If the action is determined to have significant impact, an Environmental Impact Statement is then prepared. If no significant impact is determined, a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is prepared.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) — Report which details any adverse economic, social, and environmental effects of a proposed transportation project for which federal funding is being sought.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) — Federal agency whose mission is to protect the environment by the control and abatement of pollution in the areas of air, water, solid waste, noise, radiation, and toxic substances.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) — Division of the U.S. Department of Transportation that specializes in highway transportation.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) — Division of the U.S. Department of Transportation that funds transit planning and programs.

Geographic Information System (GIS) — A computer system capable of capturing, storing, analyzing, and displaying geographically referenced information; data identified according to location.

Heavy Rail – High-speed, passenger rail cars operating singly or in trains of two or more cars on fixed rails in separate rights-of-way from which all other vehicular and foot traffic are excluded.

Impact – An effect that a transportation improvement could have on the natural or manmade environment.

Land Use — Refers to the manner in which portions of land or the structures on them are used, i.e., commercial, residential, retail, industrial, etc.

Level of Service (LOS) – A qualitative measurement of the operations conditions within a traffic system and how these conditions are perceived by drivers and passengers. LOS A is free-flow, while LOS F is the worst condition.

Light Rail Transit (LRT) – Lightweight passenger rail cars operating singly (or in short, usually two-car, trains) on fixed rails in right-of-way that is not separated from other traffic for much of the way. Light rail vehicles are driven electrically with power being drawn from an overhead electric line via a trolley or a pantograph.

Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) – The transportation improvement selected by decision-makers as the solution to the transportation needs and problems in a corridor.

Long Range — In transportation planning, refers to a time span of more than five years.

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) — A document spanning a minimum of twenty years, resulting from a collaborative regional planning process.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) — The organizational entity designated by law with lead responsibility for developing transportation plans and programs for urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population. In Tennessee, there are eleven MPOs.

Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) – The agency that operates and maintains the local bus system for Nashville/Davidson County.

Mixed-traffic – Automobiles and transit vehicles sharing the same roadway.

Mixed-use – A type of development where residences and businesses are located in the same area.

Mobility — The ability to move or be moved from place to place.

Mode, Intermodal, Multimodal – Form of transportation, such as automobile, transit, bicycle and walking. Intermodal refers to the connections between modes and multimodal refers to the availability of transportation options within a system or corridor.

Monorail — Guided transit vehicles operating on or suspended from a single rail, beam, or tube. Monorail vehicles usually operate in trains.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) — Federal law passed in 1969 which requires an analysis of environmental impacts of federal actions (including the funding of projects).

Notice of Intent — Document prepared to inform the public of the scope of a proposed action or project.

Operations & Maintenance Costs (O & M costs) – The expense of keeping a project running once it is built.

Pedestrian Walkway — A secured path for walking.

Preliminary Engineering Phase (PE) – The project development phase that includes preparation of environmental and construction documentation, such as plans, specifications, and cost estimates. Preliminary Right-of-Way work, appraisal maps and estimates may also be reimbursed with Federal-aid funding for the preliminary engineering phase.

Project - An undertaking to develop, implement, or construct a particular transportation enhancement at a specific location or locations.

Right-of-Way (ROW) - A linear corridor of land used for transportation or other facilities such as highways, roads, streets, railroads, trails, light-rail, utilities, etc.

Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) – Agency responsible for developing a regional transit network for the nine-county Middle Tennessee region. RTA currently operates a rideshare service and will operate the regional transit system.

State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) – A staged, multiyear, statewide, intermodal program that is consistent with the state and metropolitan transportation plans and which identifies the priority transportation projects to be undertaken over the next three years.

Surface Transportation Program (STP) – Federal-aid highway funding program that funds a broad range of surface transportation capital needs, including many roads, transit, sea and airport access, vanpool, bike, and pedestrian facilities.

Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ) – The unit of geography most commonly used in conventional transportation planning models.

Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) – State agency responsible for transportation issues and planning in Tennessee.

Transit – Public transportation such as buses or trains.

Transit Oriented Development – (TOD) Mixed-used, higher density development located within ½ mile of a transit station.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) — A financially constrained list of prioritized transportation projects developed by a metropolitan planning organization (MPO). The TIP covers a period of at least three years but may cover a longer period for informational purposes. The TIP must include documentation of federal and state funding sources for each project and be consistent with the Long Range Plan and adopted local comprehensive plans.

United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) – A federal agency that establishes the nation's overall transportation policy. Under its umbrella, there are ten administrations whose jurisdictions include highway planning, development and construction; urban mass transit; railroads; aviation; and the safety of waterways, ports, highways, and oil and gas pipelines.

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